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ABSTRACT

An interpretive field study examined how beginning teachers with a whole language perspective went about manifesting their beliefs. Using the methods of purposeful sampling, four student teachers who were both committed and knowledgeable concerning the tenets of whole language were observed and interviewed during the student teaching experience. Results indicated that each of the student teachers maintained her whole language philosophy. Five categories emerged depicting the beliefs and teaching practices of these student teachers: (1) existing school practices; (2) knowledge and learning; (3) curriculum; (4) concept of teacher; and (5) concept of student. Findings suggest that the student teachers' beliefs and teaching practices matched very closely with the dimensions outlined by those calling for reflective teaching and that teacher preparation programs interested in developing reflection in future teachers might consider whole language philosophy. (Contains 30 references.) (Author/RS)

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MANIFESTING A WHOLE LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVE: NOVICE TEACHERS IN ACTION

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Manifesting a Whole Language Perspective: Novice Teachers in Action

Abstract

This article reports the findings of an interpretive field study regarding how beginning teachers with a whole language perspective went about manifesting their beliefs. Using the methods of purposeful sampling, four student teachers who were both committed and knowledgeable concerning the tenets of whole language were observed and interviewed during the student teaching experience. It was found that each of the student teachers maintained their whole language philosophy. Five categories emerged depicting the beliefs and teaching practices of these student teachers: 1) existing school practices, 2) knowledge and learning, 3) curriculum; 4) concept of teacher, and 5) concept of student. It was concluded that ttheir beliefs and teaching practices matched very closely with the dimensions outlined by those calling for reflective teaching and that teacher preparation programs interested in developing refelction in future teachers might consider whole language philosophy.

Whole language is the focus of much attention in both academic writing and in public schools today. According to Pearson (1989), "whole language has spread so rapidly throughout North America that it is a fact of life in literacy curriculum and research" (p. 231). Furthermore, he adds, " Unlike the open-school movement of the early 1970's, it is not likely to die at an early age" (p. 231).

Although there is a great deal of academic discourse concerning the philosophy and teaching practices associated with whole language, little research has been done investigating the ways whole language practitioners manifest their philosophy. Still less is known

about how teachers learn and develop into whole language classroom teachers. One way to help us better understand whole language from the classroom teacher's perspective is to study novice teachers attempts at manifesting whole language during their student teaching practicum. However, before looking at just how novice teachers begin implementing whole language in the classroom, it is necessary to look at some of the road blocks they face.

First, they are confronted by elementary classroom dominated by a technological rationale which breaks down knowledge into discrete competencies and is preoccupied with efficiency and accountability in terms of what is measurable (Giroux, 1984, Apple and Teitelbaum, 1986; Goodlad, 1984; DeCatell & Luke, 1987; Wise, 1988). State mandated tests which measure specific competencies in areas such as language arts exert tremendous control over instruction. Nervous that students will not measure up, many teachers "begin to teach in a format that will prepare students to deal with the content as it will be tested" (Wise, 1988, p. 330). Instead of viewing reading and writing as processes to be developed, teachers feel pressured into using commercially produced materials that break up complex skills into small steps so that each step can be mastered. Can the philosophy of whole language and its call for increased teacher autonomy and a curriculum that emerges from the needs and interests of students survive the onslaughts of a technological rationale which encourages "teacher proof" curricular packages and the "deskilling" of teachers? Especially when whole language educators advocates that teachers must "take both control and responsibility for the literacy development of their pupils"

(Goodman, 1986, p. 363). Furthermore, can beginning teachers who have been exposed to the philosophy of whole language in their preservice course work keep a whole language perspective alive once exposed to the realities of classroom life?

Much has been written about how the "ideals" prospective teachers have learned in their teacher education programs are "washed out" during their student teaching experience (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Griffin, Barnes, Hughes, O'Neal, Dfino, Edwards, & Hukill, 1983; Hodges, 1982; Daves, 1990). Although research exists that suggests that some beginning teachers under certain conditions can maintain their "ideals" learned during their teacher education program (Ross & Zbikowski 1990; Goodman, 1988; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985; Lacy, 1977), no research to date exists which suggest that beginning teachers can manifest a whole language perspectives in the classroom during their student teaching experience. This study was an initial attempt to look at how a group of four student teachers both committed and knowledgeable about the principles of whole language choose to manifest their whole language perspective during their student teaching. After outlining the sampling procedures and research methods, the way these four student teachers choose to manifest their whole language perspectives will be described. Lastly, implication to the research findings will be discussed.

Sample Selection

Following the guidelines of purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glasar & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1980) a number of steps were taken to identify those student teachers that were used as informants for this study. First, an initial pool of sixteen candidates

was gathered by going to the language arts methods course that preservice teachers take prior to their student teaching assignments and asking for volunteers who would be willing to participate in the study. From that initial pool, interviews were conducted to determine those students who had a high degree of commitment and a well-formed understanding of the philosophy of whole language.

The interviews delved into a variety of topics associated with whole language instruction: the kinds of whole language instruction, if any, they saw themselves using in their student teaching experience; when (right away, after they feel comfortable with the routines of teaching, at the end?) they planned on using whole language strategies for teaching children; the ways that they think children learn to read and write; and in what kinds of situations (only if the cooperating teacher used whole language instruction, only if the cooperating teacher said it was okay, or no matter what?) they would attempt to use whole language instruction?

After interviews were conducted an initial sorting of the sample was conducted looking specifically at those candidates that expressed both commitment to and understanding of the principles of whole language. Next, the college instructors who taught these pre-service students whole language instruction were asked to rate them on their commitment and knowledge. Their ratings were combined with the information gathered during interviews to help select the four top candidates for this study.

Methods associated with interpretive field studies were used to collect and analyze data (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Erickson, 1986; Spradly, 1979; & Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Observation and

interviews were the primary means for gathering data. In addition relevant documents such as lesson plans, student work, public school guidelines, and textbook materials were used.

Approximately 108 hours of time was spent in the field observing the informants. During most observations, interviews with the informants were also conducted. If interviews could not take place during the times observations were made, phone interviews were conducted within five days. Observations were purposely staggered so as to watch each informant at different times of the day and different days of the week. In this way different stages of their student teaching and a wide selection of classroom life was witnessed. The purpose of these observations was to provide the researcher with "here-and-now experiences in depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). Observations produced examples that depicted the kinds of instruction in which the student teacher engaged the class in. Follow up interviews were conducted to verify the intent of these practices and the beliefs that were behind them. Interviews were also conducted with the informant's cooperating teachers and university supervisors to assess the informant's work.

Analysis of Data

The "constant comparative" method of analysis was used as a guide for understanding the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz , 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this method comparisons begin with an analysis of the initial data and continue throughout the entire period of data collection and analysis. Categories of meaning began to emerge from initial data and gave focus to later data collection. With more data collection and analysis, the properties that made up

the categories become further delineated and better understood. Finally, the informants were given the opportunity to respond to the findings prior to writing a final draft.

Manifesting a Whole Language Perspective in the Classroom

It must be noted that the perspectives of the informants--Jane, Karen, Carol, and Linda (pseudonyms)--were not solely influenced by their pre-service methods courses in whole language. There were other significant factors influencing their perspectives, such as a social studies methods course and their own personal preferences towards certain teaching styles. However, whole language philosophy was the dominate force in shaping these women's perspectives and best exemplifies what their visions of classroom life should be like. Five categories emerged depicting the beliefs and teaching practices of these student teachers: existing school practices, knowledge, curriculum, concept of teacher and concept of student. It should be pointed out, however, that these categories are not mutually exclusive; overlap occurs between categories so that many of the examples used to describe one category could also be used in describing another category. For example, these student teachers worked towards making the curriculum activity-centered. They also conceived of students as being active agents in their own learning. Consequently, examples depicting their perspectives of curriculum could also be used to describe their perspectives toward students or vice versa.

Existing School Practices

Each of the informants took a critical stance towards existing school practices, particularly the narrow skills-based logic of

language arts instruction. Karen, whose placement site's curriculum was the most heavily controlled by a skills-based language arts program, voiced criticisms of her cooperating teacher:

> I sit and listen to her [cooperating teacher] going over these vocabulary words from the reading books, and I'll loose my train of thought, and then I hear her start yelling at some kids, "What did I say?" I myself couldn't answer that question because my mind has started to wander, too. So I'm constantly thinking how am I going to remember this when I teach? How can I make it more exciting or meaningful for them? (interview with Karen 9/25/89)

As Karen begin doing more and more of the teaching, she began to focus her criticisms away from her cooperating teacher and more on the commercially produced textbooks and the policies of the school in which she was placed:

> There seemed to be so many of these skill things that need to be covered for each story. There were at least three dittos for each skill that went along with the story. Three weeks go by and you have read one story. . .the book [commercially produced social studies book] was really stupid; it is called "communities," and the first part of it, the one that they dealt with, was about maps, and the book did a narrow coverage of it, I did a lot more with it. . .The third graders that I had don't need the kind of busy work we gave them for homework [in reference to the school policy of four homework assignments

per week], a lot of them don't even need to do it. . . . (interview with Karen 11/21/89)

This critical stance seemed imperative for setting the stage for these student teachers' attempts at manifesting their whole language perspective. Without looking at classroom life as problematic it would have been hard for them to go against any teaching practice that was counter to their whole language perspective.

Knowledge and Learning

Each of the informants saw personal knowledge as being valuable and attempted to allow children to interpret the knowledge they had acquired based on their prior learning. Linda exemplified this value towards personal knowledge during a lesson in which the students, doing an assignment in comparisons, were to fill in the correct answer in the following sentence: A toad (can, cannot) swim as well as a frog. One second grade boy circled "can" because he had a pet toad and had seen it swim faster than any frog he had ever known. Listening intently to this student explain his reasoning, Linda said, "I'll tell you what; you put down what you think, and I'll grade it that way" (observation of Linda 10/2/89).

All the informants viewed knowledge as much more valuable when it was presented in whole forms rather than in fragmented pieces. Karen explained the futility of the fragmented, skills approach, "I don't know how they can enjoy the story when it is cut up into vocabulary at the beginning and all those skill sheets at the end" (interview with Karen 9/19/89).

The informants viewed the process of obtaining knowledge to be just as important, if not more so, than the knowledge actually acquired. This emphasis on process was most evident in the way these student teachers taught writing. Jane, for example, worked at helping students view writing as a series of stages that would eventually lead to the finished product of a story book. Over a period of several weeks, Jane took the students through the following five stages: 1) the students wrote a number of creative stories and compiled them in a personal folder; 2) the students picked one of their favorite stories, and Jane met with them in small groups to discuss the meaning that the students had intended to express; 3) Jane showed all the students a chart of editing marks and had students work on editing their own stories; 4) Jane then had students work with a peer in order to help each other edit his/her story; 5) and finally, students copied their stories on paper, illustrated them, and made hard back covers out of cardboard and material so that they would resemble books (observations and interviews of Jane 11/8/89, 12/11/89, 12/20/89).

There was considerable effort on the part of all the student teachers to facilitate the social nature of learning, that is, learning which is promoted through interactions with others. Because they looked at learning as a social affair, each student teacher emphasized group work as a part of the the daily classroom activities. Carol expressed the reasons she valued group work:

> . . . so that they could learn from each other and work with each other. Not only were they learning actual material, they

were also learning some social skills--how to work together, and I think that is really important. I think there are a lot of really bright people who cannot work with others, and this is something they need to be able to do. (interview with Carol 11/8/89)

Curriculum

There were several different ways in which the informants' whole language perspectives shaped the way they viewed curriculum. One of the major influences was how they found potential in all subjects for contributing to language arts instruction.

All of the informants strove to combine language arts in other subject areas. Linda, for example, used science as a means to integrate language arts into the curriculum. She did a unit on turtles. As a way to broaden the students understanding about turtles, Linda established a "text set"--five books on turtles in a small box. She placed the text set in the back of the room where students freely looked through them during their spare time (observation of Linda 8/29/89). Linda eventually established a learning center where she would have different animal books on display. Her second graders went to the center to research the particular animal they were studying. For example, when students were learning about snakes, Linda instructed the students to go to a center on snakes she had set up and come up with at least one snake fact that they they could later share with the class (observation of Linda 9/19/89). To go along with their research on snakes, Linda had students make snake puppets. Students used their snake puppets as props while singing a

song that Linda taught them entitled "Sneaky Snake." The students later sang and acted out their puppet show at a school assembly (observation of Linda 10/23/89).

In addition to integrating language arts into other subject areas, the informants emphasized attempts to make the curriculum more context specific to the lives of their students. Karen, commenting on what she considered irrelevant assignments suggested by the commercially produced teachers' manuals, noted, "It is scary what schools can do; we need to get kids to understand that learning is related to their life[sic]" (interview with Karen 9/19/89). Karen taught a lesson from the English book calling for students to sequence the order of events in a paragraph about the birth of puppies. Since her students had recently been trick-or-treating, Karen decided to alter the lesson to include something about Halloween. Instead of the students time-ordering the paragraph about the puppies, they were allowed to write a paragraph describing what they had done for Halloween from the time they came home after school to the time they went to bed (interview with Karen 11/30/89).

Besides the student teachers' attempts at providing a curriculum that was more contextualized to the lives of their pupils, they also stressed a curriculum responsive to the needs and interests of their students. Observing that many of her students were getting into skirmishes during free time, a time when they were allowed to play games, Jane developed a learning center that instructed the students to do the following assignment:

> Most newspapers have an advice column. Pretend you are the advice columnist and write a solution to the following letter in your investigation notebooks: There is a problem in our classroom. Several students enjoy the classroom, but there are not enough toys to go around. Our class fights over them. What should we do? (observation of Jane 11/4/89)

The key informants viewed curriculum in which students actively participated as important. Linda explains her position about an activity-oriented curriculum. "I'm really into hands-on. . . I don't like to talk about it; I like to do it" (interview with Linda 12/1/89). Among other things, Linda had her second graders make puppets, sing songs, and make turtles out of clay. One time Linda was reading the book We're Back. In one scene, dinosaurs were somehow transported to the future, and the police were telling them to freeze. As she was reading the story, she had the kids get out of their seats to pretend they were the dinosaurs and instructed them to freeze (interview with Linda 12/1/89).

The final way these student teachers' curricular perspectives were influenced by whole language philosophy involved their views on evaluation. They used several methods for evaluation of students and saw evaluation as more than just a student's grade. Their evaluation served as a means for observing the progress of student's total academic and social development. Carol used a variety of evaluation techniques such as using check lists, doing surveys, listening to students read, conducting individual conferences, keeping anecdotal records, and having students evaluate themselves.

Although reluctant to speak up at a teacher's meeting Carol voiced her beliefs about the importance of evaluating kids through observation:

> I didn't want to say anything, but I couldn't help myself. Finally, I said, "Don't you think you can know your students better if you read books and discuss stories?" I guess they [teachers in attendance] don't trust their own judgement. (interview with Carol 10/6/89).

Concept of Teachers

There was an overwhelming belief on the part of these student teachers that curriculum should be controlled by the classroom teacher and not from outside sources. Most of the activities that Linda did in science and social studies came from her own curricular materials and not from teacher's manuals or the school's curricular guides. For instance, Linda taught a lesson with the intent of helping students become aware of the different geographical features of various land forms (mountains, islands, plains, and deserts). She had students cut out outdoor scenes from National Geographic. Linda collected the cut out scenes, categorized them into the four different land forms, and pasted them onto a large poster. She then gathered the students around the poster and had them discuss any differences they could find between the different groups of pictures (observation of Linda 10/12/89).

When Carol was given her first opportunity to teach reading (to one reading group of eight children), instead of using the basal

reading series that her cooperating teacher was using, Carol decided to have students read a novel by Lloyd Alexander entitled The Book of Three (observation of Carol 9/25/89). Later, Carol was given charge of the rest of the class. It was the contention of many of the teachers Carol talked to at her school that using trade books was fine for above average readers but was not suitable for average and below average students. Carol, however, felt that using trade books was essential for all fifth graders, even more so with the average and below average students (interview with Carol 10/6/89). Therefore, Carol decide against using the commercially produced reading series and opted instead to use the novel The Wish Giver, by Bill Brittain, for the average and below average fifth graders (observation of Carol 10/6/89).

Viewing the teacher as a learner was another important concept for the informants. Jane not only saw herself as a learner, but also she demonstrated to her students that she was actively involved in learning:

> I was consciously trying to demonstrate reading and writing. If it is reading time, and I say reading is something really fun and important, and when we do it, I'm grading papers, then I think that sends a message to the kids that is a mixed signal. When we do writing, and we are brainstorming, I'll put a pencil in my hands and brainstorm with them, and I'll exchange papers with them, too. (interview with Jane 12//18/89)

Learning about their students through observation was another one of the teacher's roles the key informants discussed as being important. Carol described such activity:

> Watching what they are doing. If there is a reading group, and they are discussing a book, go over to the group and observe the kinds of conversations that are going on. If they are getting off task, get them back on task by asking them one question like, "What about this?" If they are over at the art table or something, maybe asking them a question to think about different colors they might use. (interview with Carol 4/26/89)

Carol's observation of students also led to decisions on curricular activities. Chris, one of the better readers in the fifth grade, was writing for his own enjoyment a "Mid-evil Recipe Book," a compilation of different magical potions. After seeing Chris's book and noticing the enjoyment he got out of writing it, Carol decided to initiate a book writing assignment. She called together six students who had just completed reading a novel. Carol showed the group Chris's recipe book and began a discussion on what kind of books they might write. She gave students some strategies to help them get started and then turned them loose to begin their stories (observation fo Carol 11/3/89).

These student teachers did not view the teacher as someone who bureaucratically controlled students' behavior and learning; instead, they viewed the teacher as a facilitator who set up the

environment, allowing students to pursue their own personal knowledge. Jane, for example, discussed the intent of the many learning centers that were set up in her room:

> We [Jane and her cooperating teacher] don't explain the learning center. We set them up and leave the directions at the centers, and the kids are responsible. If they have questions, I'll go over and help them. But we stay out of their way. They keep a journal where they record everything that they are doing. We look over that at the end of the day, but we don not actively participate with the students while they are engaged at the centers. (interview with Jane 9/7/89)

Carol also used the word "guide" to express her teaching role (interview with Carol 4/26//89). Her style of teaching was exemplified one day as she was leading a discussion with her reading group. Carol began the discussion by saying, "Discuss with each other up to the chapter 'The Black Lake'" (observation of Carol 9/18/89). Because of the lack of response by students, Carol instructed the students as follows: "Turn to page 150. We're going to do an activity called 'say something'" (observation of Carol 9/18/89). Carol explained the activity as one in which different members of the group would read a part of the story and then say something that the passage reminded them of. Carol demonstrated what she meant by going first. The passage Carol read was about some characters who were sitting around a table. Carol explained that for her, the passage conjured up images of all the animals in the zoo sitting

around the table talking to each other. Unlike the earlier discussion that fizzled out, the say something activity generated some interesting student response: "It reminds me of not seeing my grandparents who are living in Nigeria". . . "It reminds me of Monroe Lake in the middle of the night" (observation of Carol 9/118/89).

Finally, the key informants saw the teacher's role as fostering a personal and caring relationship with students. This personal and caring relationship was balanced by their desire for students to give them a certain degree of respect. Jane spent a great deal of time getting to know her third grade students. One way Jane did so was by exchanging personal letters with students. In Jane's classroom, everyone, including the teachers, had mailboxes. Jane would write letters to students and invite them to write her back (observation of Jane 9/12//89).

Another way Jane attempted to develop a personal relationship with students was by encouraging students to call her by her first name. Students picked up on her encouragement, and Jane became known to her students as Miss Jane (observation of Jane 9/7/89). However, Jane was confronted by discipline problems. According to Jane's cooperating teacher, "Jane had several weeks of real trying times where she had troubles with several children and had to work her way through that" (interview with Jane's cooperating teacher 12//20//89). Jane believed that her discipline problems were caused by not being firm enough: "I made the grave error of being too lenient. I didn't put my foot down at appropriate times. Now I am" (interview with Jane 11/4/89).

Concept of Students

The key informants viewed students as active agents in their own learning. Linda saw students as researchers and even encouraged students to call themselves researchers (observation of Linda 8/29/89). One activity Linda initiated was having students learn what they could about turtles. Linda put up on the bulletin board a large piece of paper with two categories: 1) what we know about turtles and, 2) what we can find out. The class discussed what they had learned about turtles through their observations and their readings, while Linda wrote those things down in the first category. Then students and teacher made a list of things about turtles that they would like to know more about. For instance, one student wondered what turtles ate, which Linda added to category two in the form of a question. Following the discussion, Linda showed a video on turtles that she had secured from the city library. One of the statements made during the video was that turtles ate mosquitoes, which was immediately picked up by a student. The student excitedly pointed to the question in category two and exclaimed, "Turtles eat mosquitoes!" (observation of Linda 9/29/89).

Karen believed pupils should actively investigate things that interested them:

> I am very much in favor of the kids finding out things for themselves and learning how to do that because so many times in school they have this feeling that they need the answer to be right and not trusting themselves to know where to find the answer. (interview with Karen 11//21//89)

Karen brought in several supplementary books to go with various science units. In one unit on eggs, several students became interested in the books that Karen had brought in. One student, Donald, who perused several of the books, became interested in whether or not bats laid eggs like other flying creatures. Seizing the opportunity, Karen went over to an encyclopaedia and helped Donald find out if there was some information in the book that could answer his question (observation fo Karen 9/19/89).

The informants believed that students should make choices in what they learned. Jane, for example, provided students with opportunities to do things they were interested in. Jane had the class brainstorm some ideas, and it was decided by the class that they would do the Thanksgiving play (interview with Jane 11//8/89).

Carol provided students with choice because, in her view, a student's choice "is something they want to do and will take responsibility for" (interview with Carol 11/8/89). One way Carol provided choice was by giving students options in doing their assignments. After reading a trade book, for example, students had the choice of seven different options for a final project, such as writing and enacting a television interview, writing a newspaper story, or making a diorama (observation of Carol 9/26/89).

Lastly, the informants viewed students as being responsible for their learning and behavior. It annoyed Karen when students would complete their homework without putting much thought into their assignments. In one assignment on drawing conclusions, two students had totally illogical answers to every question. Karen held a conference with the two students and went through the assignment

with them. After they had gone over the assignment, Karen instructed them to go back to their seats and change their answers (observation of Karen 10/11/89). Karen explained her reasons for such attention to the homework: "I wanted to make them accountable for not thinking and just writing an answer down" (interview with Karen 11/30/89).

Jane worked towards helping students become responsible for solving their social conflicts. It was a common occurrence for members of her third grade class to hit each other when there was a disagreement. Jane held a classroom meeting, explained to students her position on hitting their fellow classmates: "People are hitting each other, and that I will not tolerate in this classroom" (observation of Jane 11/4/89). Jane then asked the class for strategies that students could use in dealing with someone who was hitting or making fun of them. Several suggestions were offered, such as staying away from persons who resorted to hitting people. Jane completed her lecture to students: "There has [sic] been some suggestions given on things you can do besides hitting. I want you to solve your own problems. You don't necessarily need me to solve your problems" (observation of Jane 11/4/89).

Implication For Teacher Preparation Programs

The clearest implication from this study is that these beginning teacher's whole language perspective was not "washed out" during their student teaching experience. In fact, whole language gave them a comprehensive view of education, affecting the way they viewed existing teaching practices, knowledge and learning, curriculum, and the roles of teachers and students.

For these students whole language was the means for reflection on all aspects of the teaching/learning process. This research, therefore, suggests that whole language philosophy might be a viable means for teacher preparation programs interested in fostering reflection in future teachers.

Currently there is a growing debate in teacher education reform calling for future teachers to be reflective (e.g., Smyth, 1989; Tom, 1985; Zeichner and Liston, 1987). For example, Zeichner and Liston (1987) suggest that

> . . . unless we can begin to prepare teachers who are willing to assume more central roles in shaping the direction of their own work and school environments, the kinds of changes which may be on the horizon with regard to the occupation of teaching will continue to maintain the familiar pattern of "change but no change." The preparation for reflective student teachers is a necessary first step for those of us who work in university programs of teacher education. (p. 45)

The dimensions outlined by those calling for reflection (e.g., Smyth, 1989; Tom, 1985; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) correspond very closely to how these student teachers manifested their whole language perspectives in the classroom. Tom (1985), for example, argues that teachers must see existing teaching practices as problematic and ask themselves what constitutes wise teaching practices. Grant (1984) also believes that teachers should make problematic their goals, their teaching actions and their teaching-

learning environments. Many advocates of reflective teaching argue that teachers need a large degree of autonomy to make decisions about goals, methods, and content (Kohl, 1976; Apple, 1986; Giroux, 1986). Another dimension of reflective teaching is the view that educational phenomena are socially constructed; therefore, they are both time bound and culture specific. Wise (1988) explains:

> Because students are not standardized in their needs, stages of development, home environments, preconceptions, or learning styles, a given stimulus does not produce a predictable response. A teacher must make decisions based on knowledge of the student, of the subject matter, and of pedagogy in order to create the right conditions for learning. (p. 332)

In sum, reflective teaching requires that teachers question those taken-for-granted practices in schools. They should see their roles defined as decision-makers, specifically for goals, content, and methods. Finally, reflective teachers should realize that students, classroom contexts, and subject matter are not standardized in nature and therefore teaching instruction can not be standardized either.

If teacher preparation programs are interested in fostering future teachers to become more reflective, they must find viable means to do so. Course work in the philosophy and teaching practices of whole language along with corresponding experiences in their practice teaching might be one way they can accomplish this goal.

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